

12 July 2020

Dear Member of the Senedd,

We are writing as lay officials of the National Union of Journalists who represent members working for Reach plc in Wales to seek your support and help in a situation that we believe poses a very serious threat to the media in Wales.

As you know, Reach is by far the largest publisher of newspapers in Wales, with a stable that includes the Western Mail, the Daily Post, the South Wales Echo, the South Wales Evening Post, Wales on Sunday and a number of associated weekly papers, as well as the news websites WalesOnline and North Wales Live.

On July 7 Reach announced that because of diminished revenues during the lockdown, it was making 550 jobs across Britain redundant.

On Friday July 10 details began to emerge about the impact of this announcement in Wales.

In Cardiff, more than 70 journalists were told their jobs are on a redundancy "at risk" list, while in North Wales the number of "at risk" journalists is 20.

While the plan is for a smaller number of journalists to leave - around 15 from Media Wales in Cardiff and Swansea, we understand, with an as yet unknown additional number from North Wales - the reduction will inevitably have a detrimental impact on news coverage in our nation.

NUJ members also have grave concerns about the group's commitment to Wales following a decision to effectively merge Media Wales - the Cardiff and Swansea operation - with an English division of Reach covering the Midlands, Cheshire and Lincolnshire.

There is no longer an editor-in-chief based in Cardiff, and the new cross-border division will be run by a "Marketplace Publisher" based in Birmingham.

Meanwhile the editor of the Daily Post has been removed from his post at very short notice and the business is run by a Marketplace Publisher based in the north west of England.

There are also plans to integrate the work of journalists working in Wales with the London-based "national" papers, the Daily Mirror, the Daily Express and the Daily Star, as well as their websites. At the same time, the intention is to replace stories and features produced by redundant writers who have been working in Wales with material produced by a "shared content" unit based in England.

Inevitably this would dilute the Welsh content of the brands and lead to the publication of health and education stories, for example, that have no relevance in Wales because of the devolution settlement. It would create additional confusion in readers' minds about which level of government was responsible for public services in Wales.

We regard these proposals as a major threat to our media and to our Welsh democracy. If you agree with us we ask you to express your concern by writing to one of the two senior executives driving the plans - Alan Edmunds, now chief operations officer of Reach plc, but at one time editor of the Western Mail. His email address is alan.edmunds@reachplc.com.

Thank you in advance for your support, for which we are very grateful.

Best wishes,

Martin Shipton, Father of the Media Wales NUJ Chapel and Reach Group Chapel Chair

Sarah Hodgson, Mother of the Daily Post Chapel